
New Hampshire
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New Hampshire Targets Invasive Plants

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Ecological impacts caused by invasive plant species have become important issues in natural resource management and conservation biology today. The ability of these non-native invasive species to become established, thrive, and out compete native plants in many types of ecosystems is one of the primary causes of environmental degradation and habitat loss. Invasives are species that are adaptable to new environments, aggressive, produce many offspring, and lack natural predators to keep them in check. Invasive plants also tend to be more efficient at absorbing moisture and nutrients from the soil allowing them to grow larger and increasing their ability to compete with most native species. These combined traits are what make these plants highly invasive and a threat to the health and well being of our natural environment.

Not knowing the threat they posed, many invasives were brought to North America as landscape specimens in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Others, however, were introduced for agriculture, wildlife habitat enhancement and soil conservation purposes. With invasive species being planted everywhere it was quite easy for them to spread their seed or other propagative means into surrounding areas such as natural environments, agricultural fields, managed wood lots, and even cityscapes. The mode of spread is usually by wind, water, wildlife and humans. The repeated process of spread has become so extreme that invasive species cost the United States billions of dollars per year. This is a result of lost agricultural and forest crops, impacts to natural resources and the environment, and the control efforts required to eradicate them.

In 1999, the Federal Government passed legislation enacting policy guidelines requiring all states to evaluate their invasive species problems and to take immediate action for their control. In response, the State of New Hampshire passed the Invasive Species Act (Act) requiring the Commissioner of the Department of Agriculture, Markets & Food (DAMF) to address the adverse environmental and economic effects of invasive species upon the state and create rules to prevent and minimize their spread in the state. The Act also required a committee to be formed for the purpose of evaluating plant, insect and fungal species that may pose an immediate danger to the environmental and economic interests of the state and make recommendations to the Commissioner for which species should be prohibited.

On June 1, 2004, the DAMF adopted a new set of rules (Chapter AGR 3800) prohibiting the collection, transportation, sale, distribution, propagation or transplantation of 18 invasive upland plant species including all of their cultivars and varieties as well as 15 invasive insect species. The list of plants include Tree of Heaven, Garlic Mustard, European Barberry, Oriental Bittersweet, Black Swallow-wort, Pale Swallow-wort, Autumn Olive, Water-flag Iris, Giant Hogweed, Blunt-leaved Privet, Showy Bush Honeysuckle, Japanese Honeysuckle, Morrow's Honeysuckle, Tartarian Honeysuckle, Japanese Knotweed, Common Buckthorn, Glossy Buckthorn, and Multiflora Rose. In addition, Burning Bush, Norway Maple, and Japanese Barberry will be added to the prohibited list on January 1, 2007. For more information regarding invasives and the rules, tel. 271-3488.

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